

CONFIDENTIAL

28 March 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Conversation with Senator Margaret Chase Smith
Re Soviet Bomber Situation

25X1A 1. Having understood from the Director that Senator Margaret Chase Smith had recently expressed to him continued concern about the Soviet bomber problem following the recent briefing of the Bomber Defense Subcommittee of Senate Armed Services Committee by [REDACTED] 25X1A [REDACTED] OSR, I called on Senator Smith today to ask if she would like a private follow up session.

25X1D 2. Senator Smith said that she had the impression that until fairly recently we had been quite troubled by the Soviet bomber threat but our recent briefing had indicated that this threat was gradually receding. She wondered whether we really had all the facts, and whether earlier estimates had been wrong. I said I understood that our figures on present strength and rates of production were based on firm evidence, but future projections were, of course, more speculative. [REDACTED]

25X1D 3. I suggested that the confusion might have resulted from past differences between Agency and Air Force estimates. Senator Smith was not clear on whether her earlier impressions stemmed from our briefings or those of the Air Force but said she had had a clear impression that our recent briefing was a good deal more conservative than briefings she had gotten a year or two ago.

4. I said we would be glad to meet with her at any time to review the situation in detail. She said she appreciated this offer and would let me know if she wished to follow it up. She added that she usually preferred an informal discussion to a regular briefing of the full Subcommittee, since she had the impression that in our presentations before the full Subcommittee

we "didn't always tell all we knew." I said that this was not exactly right, since our formal briefings were always quite candid as far as all relevant evidence and formal estimates were concerned. However, I conceded that the larger the audience the more reluctant we were to get into more speculative matters or express personal opinion. I assured her we would be glad to discuss anything she wished to take up with us informally with complete candor and at any time.

5. Senator Smith mentioned that shortly before Secretary McNamara's retirement, he had confided to her that in retrospect he thought he had been wrong in closing out the B-52 program, but after he realized his mistake the expense of reactivating the program would have been prohibitive.

6. In closing, Senator Smith explained her reasons for taking herself off of our Subcommittee, pointing out there was considerable pressure from some of the junior members of the full Committee for Subcommittee assignments and that Senators Murphy and Dominick had both particularly wanted to get on the CIA Subcommittee. She said that in addition to other considerations, she thought it desirable that some of the younger Republicans be brought into the CIA picture, and she hoped this would prove useful. However, she said she had many regrets about stepping aside. I said I hoped she would always be able to attend our Subcommittee meetings regardless of her official membership, and she said she would certainly do so when circumstances permit it.


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